

Proceedings of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

The third annual meeting of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union was held in Atlantic on May 14 and 15, 1926.

The morning of the first day was set aside for registration, during which time friends renewed their acquaintance. About forty members attended the meetings. At 1:30 P. M. Mr. T. H. Whitney, President of the Atlantic Bird Club, gave the address of welcome: the response was made by Mr. A. J. Palas, of Des Moines. Reports of officers were then presented, and committees were appointed.

The first paper on the program was one by Miss Althea R. Sherman, on "Hours spent with the Rails." In the absence of Miss Sherman, the paper was read by the Secretary. Mr. Weir R. Mills, of Pierson, presented a paper describing the wild birds that come to his door-yard; this town lot is trained to grow wild, and is of unusual interest on that account. Mr. Phil Dumont, of Drake University, gave an interesting account of experiences in a marsh near Des Moines. Dr. Weeks presented a critique of Allen's "Birds and Their Attributes." Dr. F. J. Becker, of Atlantic, told how to handle the English Sparrow problem. Rev. George Bennett discussed recent efforts at wild life conservation, and explained Dr. Hornaday's plan for reducing the bag limit on game birds.

The following officers were elected for the ensuing year: President, W. M. Rosen, Ogden; Vice-President, T. C. Stephens, Sioux City; Secretary, Kenneth R. Nelson, Des Moines; Treasurer, A. J. Palas, Des Moines; Executive Committee, Dr. L. T. Weeks, Tabor; Dr. F. J. Becker, Atlantic; Weir R. Mills, Pierson.

A committee was appointed to consider the matter of a state flower. It was also voted to urge the Iowa senators and representatives in Congress to support the bill designed to effect a reduction in the federal bag limit on game birds. It was also voted to hold the next meeting at Des Moines in May. A banquet was held in the evening, following which the Union and its guests listened to an illustrated lecture.

On the following morning at five o'clock the members and friends assembled at Sunnyside Park, and then dispersed in small parties for a few hours field work. A breakfast was served by the Atlantic Bird Club at 7:30, which brought all together again for the final gathering. Comparison of notes showed that a composite list of about eighty-one species had been made. It seemed to be the unanimous opinion that the out-door session is a valuable feature of our annual meeting.

Kenneth R. Nelson, *Secretary, I. O. U.*

ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

BRITISH BIRDS. By Archibald Thorburn, F. Z. S. Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd. New York and London. 1926. Demy 8vo. Volume III. Per volume \$5.50.

The first two volumes of this work were noticed in our last March issue. Volume III is now in circulation. This volume treats of the herons, ducks, geese, swans, doves, rails, shorebirds, and gallinaceous birds. Ninety-one species of birds are illustrated in the forty-eight colored plates. As in the previous volumes the colored plates are of unusual beauty. We believe that the smaller page, as compared with the earlier edition of the same work, and the smaller colored

plate exhibiting fewer species, is much more satisfactory from every point of view. The artistic work of Mr. Thorburn is remarkably clear and forceful. The backgrounds are adequate, and do not detract from the figures. The workmanship in reproducing the plates deserves a word of praise. While the plates furnish the chief interest in the work, the text is interesting and sufficient. We know of nothing on British birds that is likely to be more suitable for the casual reader than this work; and the plates are a genuine treasure.—T. C. S.

- (1) THE STATUS OF THE SUBSPECIFIC RACES OF BRANTA CANADENSIS. By J. D. Figgins. *Auk*, XXXVII, 1920. Pp. 94-102.
- (2) ADDITIONAL NOTES ON THE STATUS OF THE SUBSPECIFIC RACES OF BRANTA CANADENSIS. By J. D. Figgins. *Proc. Colo. Mus. Nat. Hist.*, IV, No. 3, Dec. 15, 1922. Pp. 1-19.
- (3) SOME OBSERVATIONS RELATIVE TO HYBRIDS AND INTERGRADATION. By J. D. Figgins. *Proc. Colo. Mus. Nat. Hist.*, V, No. 1, June 19, 1925. Pp. 1-11.
- (4) SOME OBSERVATIONS RELATIVE TO METEOROLOGICAL INFLUENCES. By J. D. Figgins. *Proc. Colo. Mus. Nat. Hist.*, V, No. 2, July 20, 1925. Pp. 1-21.
- (5) "TWICE TOLD TALES." By J. D. Figgins. *Proc. Colo. Mus. Nat. Hist.*, V, No. 3, October 5, 1925. Pp. 1-31.
- (6) A REPLY. By J. D. Figgins. *Proc. Colo. Mus. Nat. Hist.*, VI, No. 1, February 8, 1926. Pp. 1-7.

These papers may be said to represent an effort to show that the subspecies concept has been overworked, and that it has resulted in abuses and confusion. The discussion arising from these several papers will perhaps be of sufficient interest to our readers to justify the following resume.

(1) The author here considers the subspecies of *Branta canadensis*. In comparing *B. c. hutchinsi* with *B. c. occidentalis* he finds that they are separated by a difference in wing-length of .07 inch. Other authorities, he states, give a variation of 14 to 20 rectrices in *canadensis*, which is the same in *occidentalis*, while *hutchinsi* shows a variation of 14 to 18. Then follows a lengthy consideration of the color in the several subspecific forms, as described by various authorities. The author concludes "That it is not possible to identify a specimen as *hutchinsi* without disregarding strong evidence of its being either *canadensis* or *minima*. That such identification is largely a matter of personal preference—so-called *hutchinsi* being merely examples of *canadensis* that present one or two measurements below the minimum or specimens that are the result of a cross between *canadensis* and *minima*." Likewise, as far as measurements, number of rectrices, and color pattern are concerned, *occidentalis* is included within *canadensis*. The author concludes that *hutchinsi* and *occidentalis* are not valid subspecies, that *minima* and *canadensis* should be regarded as of specific rank, and that the "occasional 'inextricable' examples be recognized as hybrids."

A reply to this paper by Mr. Swarth¹ admits that "some of the characters first ascribed to the subspecies are unreliable", but claims that "The fact that the type specimen of *occidentalis* is not representative of the mode of that subspecies, as now defined, is obviously no reason why the form should not be

¹The Subspecies of *Branta canadensis* (*Linnaeus*). By H. S. Swarth. *Auk*, XXXVII, 1920. Pp. 268-272.